

ONE CASE OF PAPERS BEING WITHDRAWN

Dr. Stephen D. Bryen, deputy assistant secretary of defense for international trade and security policy, leaned back in his leather chair in his fourth-floor office at the Pentagon.

"Yes, I was involved in having the six papers withdrawn from the International Conference on Permafrost last July."

He pointed to a huge map of the world covering virtually an entire wall of his office.

"Look up there," he said, pointing to the Siberian region of the Soviet Union. "You see that? Did you know that the Russians have serious problems maintaining their military facilities in that area?"

He turned from the map.

"There were several Russians at the conference."

Bryen thumbed through a file on the conference, which was in Fairbanks, Alaska.

"Look at the titles of the papers we had withdrawn: they deal with the maintenance of airfields and roads on permafrost; with pipeline construction; with the performance of off-road vehicles on tundra terrain."

"Can you imagine having Defense Department-sponsored scientists briefing the Russians on how to maintain their airfields in Siberia?"

"Those papers came out of the Army Corps of Engineers' Cold Regions and Engineering Laboratory," he said, adding that the Defense

Department, as a sponsor of the work, had every right to order the papers not be presented at the conference.

Dr. Lloyd Breslau, technical director of the laboratory, prefers to look at the positive side: "The fact that six papers were deemed to be sensitive or classified doesn't detract from the fact that we were able to go ahead with 23 other presentations. I'm delighted that we were able to disseminate that much information."

But other scientists involved in the conference are not persuaded.

"The papers involved no classified information," said Dr. Timothy Hushen, of the National Research Council. "We were never given any official explanation for the papers' withdrawal. The authors were quite distressed."

"It's difficult to say what security issues might have been involved," he concluded.

Said Prof. Robert D. Miller, a soil physicist at Cornell University who was on the committee that selected papers for presentation at the conference: "From what I know of those papers, the value of them to any potential adversary is quite limited. In fact, I would guess people in USSR have been investigating the same matters for a longer time and in more places than we have."

Miller emphasized in a telephone interview that his judgment is not that of a military person, but he said, "The pertinence of any de-

tails to any military security would have to thought they were quite reasonable."

Miller said he was especially concerned about the chilling effect the suppressed scientific papers would have on scientists.

"A civilian lab like the Arctic Research Lab has a national reputation for scientific excellence," he said. "This is because it has always been in an environment in which genuine scientific problems with a genuine scientific approach and with the expectation of publishing their findings - insofar as classified matters."

Now, in light of what happened at the Permafrost Conference, Miller said he would hesitate to suggest to anyone that he join a Defense Department because of the fear that an offer may be made ... the feeling may be capricious or irrelevant regarding the publication of something that has little merit and negligible security value."

"That would be a chilling effect on a young scientist and would be a blow to the Defense establishment because of the prospect of losing the high quality scientists that we have been able to attract."